Biography



Isaac Haynes is a second-year student in the Bachelor of Architecture program at Auburn University. He is a native of Cullman, Alabama, and is the fourth of eight children. His interest in architecture emerged in high school from an interest in its broad intersections between anthropology, philosophy, art, urban planning, the built environment, and the subliminal networks in between all of them.

For him, being raised in a rural farming community, with a population just under 500, instilled a predilection to notice and appreciate the importance of community and its relationship to the infrastructure of our town. Small architectural moments like the brick pavilions in the nearby park carried a lot of weight for the community, undergoing constant use and hosting community events. This instilled an understanding that social architecture doesn’t have to be grand to be important, powerful, and successful. This served as a basis for this research.

Isaac is interested in continuing to explore how the architecture of the everyday can privilege communities by communicating with its local context, creating a more delightful architecture for all.

Isaac would like to thank his family and hometown for providing him the roots for his growth. He would also like to send many thanks to Jennifer Pindyck for countless hours spent advising and discussing this study. Additional thanks go out to Carla Keyvanian, Emily McGlohn, Magdalena Garmez and many others. He would also like to thank Adam Davis for mentorship and Craig Barker for conversations that shaped his design perspective.

Student:

Isaac Haynes

Mentors:

Jennifer Pindyck, Carla Keyvanian, Emily McGlohn

Buildings:

1. Begich Towers | Anton Anderson | Whittier, Alaska, U.S.A.

2. The Bowery Mission | William Jose | New York City, New York, U.S.A.

3. Epicenter | Maria Sykes. Original architect unknown. | Green River, Utah, U.S.A.

4. Grow Dat Youth Farm | Small Center | New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.A.

Institution:

Auburn University | School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape Architecture.

Introduction:

Most people live in ordinary worlds surrounded by ordinary architecture. As designers, we often live in these same worlds while designing imaginative, utopian architecture. These designs are often exorbitantly expensive and thereby inaccessible to ordinary people, or are often simply unfeasible altogether.

The social buildings of this study accomplish a lot through a little, repurposing buildings and conventions to create new social spaces and specific cultural narratives, and all while doing so with affordable materials.

This study of architecture, then, looks at buildings that perform remarkably well for their communities, although they may appear unremarkable in the canonical, conventional sense.

Analyzing the fundamental design principles behind the success of these buildings may yield useful design principles, methods, and approaches to architecture. These tools may enable us to create amazing architecture within any resource constraints.

In these four case studies, all the buildings respond well to programmatic needs of the community and the program, function on tight operation or construction budgets, and endure both culturally and physically.

Each essay will follow the organization of an introduction, a history, an architectural analysis, and concluding comments.

The first example is the Begich Towers in rural Alaska. The Begich is a vertical, concrete building that for the past 60 years, has aimed to hold the whole community within itself, providing an indoor main street to sustain the town throughout Alaska’s rough winters.

The second example is Grow Dat Youth Farm, which exists within a large urban park in New Orleans, a 15 minute drive from downtown. For the past 10 years, it has been a vibrant ecosystem through creating an education campus off to itself, in its own little world, and through understanding the programmatic needs so well that it makes brilliant use of the cheapest materials to create a successful program.

The next example is Epicenter, which exists in the desert of rural Utah. For the past 10 years, it operates as a single physical building, like a single-celled organism that draws people to itself and to its founder, Maria Sykes. It provides strength and identity formation to a physically isolated town facing economic decline.

The final example is the Bowery Mission in Manhattan, which serves people experiencing poverty and homelessness: an economically and socially isolated population. For the past 100+ years, The Bowery has operated like one physical unit within a multicellular organism network of buildings that extends throughout the city.

These case studies present us with an array of references spread across the U.S. from New York to Alaska, from rural to urban, and from decades of success to fresh new organizations.

This study of social architecture is even more relevant in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Healthy spaces to gather and to access services have been withheld. It has become important to understand the significance of these spaces and how to model spaces like them. The ability to construct strong spaces may give us a resistance to unpredictable, socially damaging disasters in the future.

Through this study, an understanding of the design principles that create successful spaces can translate into a better design for the architecture of the everyday. Through good design, architecture can accomplish much for its community, no matter how ordinary it may seem. In the end, our ordinary worlds may be full of extraordinary architecture.

Vertical Community in Rural Alaska







Fig. 01. Begich Towers.[1]
Fig. 02. Geographical Location.[2]
Fig. 03. Location of Begich Towers within Whittier, Alaska.[3]

Introduction:

The Begich Towers is a midcentury high rise nestled in a mountain valley that houses almost the entire population of Whittier, Alaska. Through the harsh winters, the tower block is supported by a main corridor on the ground floor which functions like the Main Street of the community, providing a gathering place for residents to cross paths while running errands. This includes going to the store, playing

in the garage, or even doing laundry. Since the 1960s, this unusual experiment of architecture has created a strong vertical community,[4] garnering international acclaim.

History:

Whittier was mostly unsettled until WWII, when it became a major military port. In November 1942, the Anton Anderson Tunnel was constructed to allow freight trains from Whittier to Anchorage. This infrastructure positioned Whittier as a hub of commerce and traffic. As WWII transitioned into the Cold War, many of the temporary wood cabins and structures were replaced with concrete buildings. One such building was the Begich Towers, which was designed to house military officers.[5]



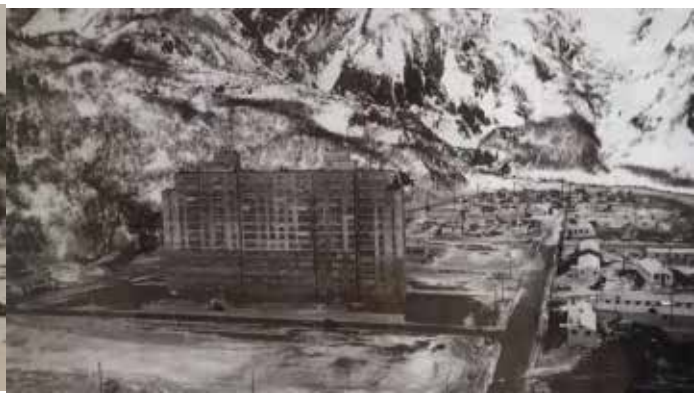


Fig. 03. The WWII military cabins (left). Image from Whittier hallway museum, accessed 2021.
Fig. 04. The newly built Begich Towers (right). Image from Whittier hallway museum, accessed 2021.

As the Cold War came to a halt, the military withdrew from Whittier and the population dwindled. The entirety of the remaining population opted to live in the Begich Towers, occupying the first two or three floors. As the decades past, the population slowly built as

fishing, lumber mills, and tourism provided jobs. The Begich Towers became a homeownership by the 1970s and remains so to this day.[6]

Whittier Description:

Whittier is adjacent to Prince William Sound, 60 miles southeast and about an hour away from Anchorage. Both freight and passenger trains run across the railroad, which divides the town into a tourist area and a residential area. A pedestrian tunnel takes tourists from the ocean side to the interior, where there are warehouses, municipal buildings, a museum, a hotel/restaurant built from the only remained WWII-era structure left in the town, the abandoned Buckner building, and of course the Begich Towers. The only housing in addition to the Begich Towers is Whittier Manor, a low rise apartment from the a cold war era[7]; two small cabins owned by Brenda, a long time resident, local shop owner and historian; and a dormitory for local fishermen. For a town that has been around for decades, it is remarkable that the Begich towers has held its ground as the place people choose to live.



Fig. 05. The rail line divides the tourist boardwalk, which hugs the marina, from the residential part of Whittier, where the Begich Towers is pictured. Whittieralaskachamber.org, accessed 2021.

Building Description:

The monolithic building towers over Whittier, competing with mountains to dominate the skyline. The tower is made of reinforced concrete, designed to withstand harsh winters, earthquakes, and nuclear blast damage. The tower was put to the test when a 9.2 earthquake rocked Whittier in 1964. The building sustained no substantial damage. This is due in part to the eight-inch seams that divide the building into three. The gap is a largely unnoticeable floor plate in the corridors. A careful eye can demarcate it by its thin black line when studying the façade.[7]



Fig. 06. Begich Towers, photo by author. 2021.

During the long, dark, cold winters in Alaska, few people want to brave the elements: an issue solved by a simple move; move main street inside. Essential services are housed along a corridor that runs the length of the first floor of the building. The interior spaces, though by no means grand, are highly effective because of their fundamental layout and amenities.

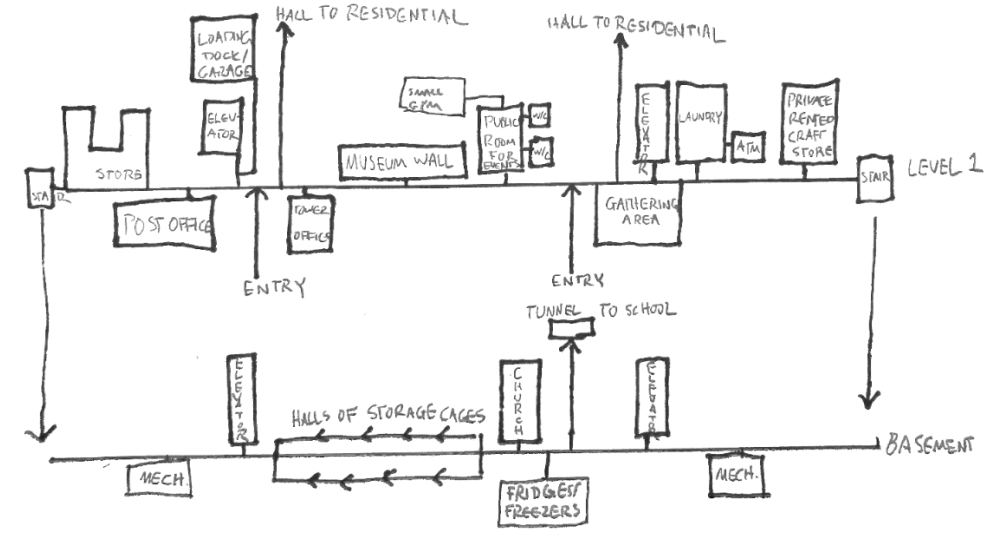


Fig. 07. Sketch diagram of the spaces in floor plan, by author, 2021.

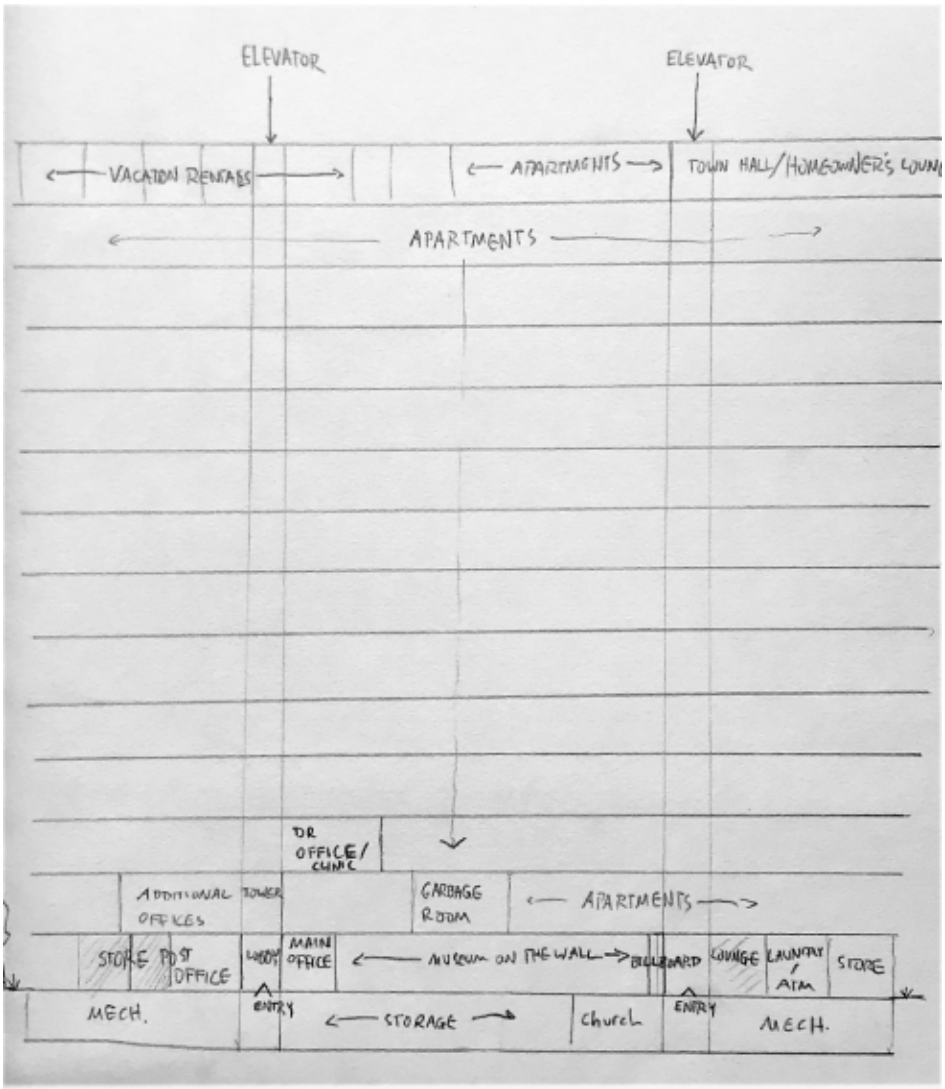


Fig. 08. Diagram of the spaces in section, by author. 2021.

Elements:

The interior of the Begich Towers is organized around the program of the space, primarily public services. The public spaces are focused on the ground floor, with satellite moments in the basement, 2nd, 3rd, and 14th floors. A variety of spaces provide for the residents. In visiting the space, I was able to talk to residents about the usage of the main floor.

A two-room store, owned by the Samoan pastor Millie and her husband, provides every food item necessary to make it through the winter, from canned goods to fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh meat, and cleaning supplies. There is enough to avoid frequent lengthy grocery trips to Anchorage.



Fig. 09. The grocery store. All interior photos by author, 2021.

An official USPS location is housed across the hall from the store, manned by one of Millie’s daughters.



Fig. 10. The post office.

The Tower Association management office is near the USPS room. This is where bills are paid, maintenance requests are put in, etc.

Behind the elevators is a garage for bikes and outdoor toys. This room also serves as the loading dock for large drop offs like supplies for the store, or even just for regular residents to unload their cars. It also serves as the entrance for the thirty or so vehicles that park in the back lot.



Fig. 11. The garage and loading dock.

Starting in the corridor and ending at the community gathering space, the history of Whittier and the Begich Towers is documented through a timeline of photos and descriptions on the walls, creating a mini-museum in the building.



Fig. 12. The museum exhibit mounted on the right-side wall.

The community gathering space. A couple of wooden benches next to the north entrance provide a space for several people to gather. Several times I saw a group of teenagers congregating there. Being on the first floor, right next to the entrance and across from the elevators, this is a highly trafficked spot. It becomes a place to congregate after coming in from walking around town, or to hang out at while friends come and go from the building.



Fig. 13. The public gathering space with part of the museum on the wall.

Across from the seating is an annoucement board which has everything from job opportunities to events to apartments for sale.



Fig. 14. Announcements on the billboard.

A coin laundry room services the building for units without washers and dryers. The room houses two washers and two dryers, as well as two vending machines. An atm is housed at the entrance to the

room. The room stays pretty quiet, but presents a place for residents to cross paths.



Fig. 15. The public laundry room.

One resident, Brenda, owns a studio room next to the laundry room. She lives in an apartment across the hall and uses the room as a little shop to make crafts she sells to tourists during the summer. Brenda has been a long time resident, arriving to Whittier in 1982, leaving her job as an artists and sign painter in California due to a recession. She has become a staple of Whittier as a local shop owner and historian. The architecture itself, a corner of the main street of the building, has formed around her presence as she shapes the culture of the town.

In the basement is the community chapel for both the Samoan and English churches. Millie the store owner and her husband lead the

services, and she can be seen below singing in a yellow dress. Her husband is at the keyboard.



Fig. 16. The church.

Additionally, the basement houses rows of cages which act as storage sheds for residents.



Fig. 17. The lockers.

One additional room in the basement houses fridges and freezers, which residents can rent out for overflow food, particularly during winter months.

One the second floor there is a trash collection room for the building. This prevents going outside during cold winter months and prevents bears from getting into the trash.



Fig. 18. The garbage room.

The second floor also houses more administrative offices for the Begich Towers Condominium Association.

Above that are floors and floors of residences. Some are 1 or 2 bedroom and some have been expanded to accommodate more. At the very top floor, June, a long time resident, rents out rooms for summer visitors. Additionally there is the conference room and community hall for the building, with views out over the bay.

Vertical Community:

In the rural landscape of Alaska, the Begich Towers present a response to creating a high social impact with a low environmental

impact. The success of the Begich Towers is partly attributable to the practical intentions and generous construction budget, in additional to the corps of engineers and military having stakes in the design. The Designer was Anton Anderson, a man who understood the needs of the region and designed the Anton Anderson tunnel.[8] He kept projects to their essential elements of comfortable apartments, designated space for activities, and a sturdy engineering to last for a lifetime. The concrete exterior provides such a solid shell that even with a field of windows across the façade, there is no real worry about weathering destroying the building anytime soon.

The building relies on the main street aspect for its community. The main street is also an adaptable space designed for long term use. This keeps it strong. It can add and subtract elements. The Ptarmigan room and the Cullum Room, which currently serve as a public room for events and a gym, respectively, are simple, anonymous rooms that can and have been switched out for different uses. even with a field of windows across the façade The simplicity of the rooms keeps them easily shapeable. The craft store is capable of shifting uses. The common gathering space in the lobby could be arranged differently for a better lounge atmosphere, like a coffee shop. The church downstairs can easily be rearranged to host events. The large Homeowners lounge on the 14th floor is capable of shifting purposes too. Even the condos can be adjusted. In addition to renovations, the rooms can be combined, as the default units have one bedroom, yet two, three, and even a five-bedroom apartment were listed for sale or rent on the public announcement board in the entrance lobby. The building isn’t

simply “managed,” it is truly owned by the residents, who care for it and shape it for their lifestyles. Program can be pulled out and pushed back in, like drawers in a giant cabinet. This building creates community inside when no one wants to go outside. It really kind of solves the issue of tower block community.

Analysis:

1.1 Aesthetics:

A few younger residents chuckle about the datedness of the structure, but in talking to Millie’s daughter, the pride and joy in the building is clear in the voices of residents. According to the city manager, 600,000 tourists around the world come to Whittier every year. When I spent time in the tourist part of town, many tourists engaged the tower, standing bemused or taking pictures, even if they don’t cross over from the touristy side to the residential side of town. The building looks peculiar: a cold-war concrete building rising above a quaint Alaskan village. Yet never in conversation did someone in Whittier describe the building as dreary or ugly. In the experience of the residents, it is not. It is a well-oiled machine, full of life and energy; it is home.

1.2 Alternatives and Challenges:

The Begich Towers have a sister building, the Buckner building, which is a six story building down the street that was also designed to house officers. Unfortunately the Buckner building was abandoned and is in a state beyond repair.[9]



Fig. 19. The abandoned Buckner building. Photo by author, 2021.

In comparing them, one notices that the Buckner building is in some ways preferable as the central living facility. There are fewer flights of stairs in an emergency, the social amenities of the Bucnker were more generous, with a theater, bowling alley, barber shop, etc.[9] The building was the first and grander of the two, with the Begich Towers designed as the second building and with more of a focus on supplying housing. Ultimately, in comparing, we see different ways the past played out, which shows us different ways the design of a city under one roof could be successful.

The Begich Towers is not without repair needs, and constant maintenance is required to keep the system running. According to an interview with David Schofield, the general manager of the whittier

towers, The entire mechanical system was redone only a few years ago. There is enough money and interest to keep the project afloat long into the future. However, the elevator system is from the 90s and needs to replaced. The exhaust ventilation needs to be installed to get air out, at a cost of something like $100,000. The sidewalks outside are crumbling and in need of repair. The parking is gravel and in need of paving. There is a desire to add a gym to the building, for winter months. These issues are not perilous. Most of the infrastructure dates back to the military base. The town at large faces infrastructure issues too. The streets are getting old and pot holes are getting big.

The difficulty in retaining young people threatens the well-being of Whittier and of the Begich Towers role in the town. David Schofield spoke of how many students graduate and go to college without ever moving back. One resident said a move was in the works because driving his daughter over an hour to Anchorage for dance classes was too much of a burden. There are just more opportunities elsewhere for kids. When I talked to the direction, he said that the school population had dwindled to eleven students some years ago. If the student population drops below ten, the school would lose its funding and shut down, spelling the slow death of a town as the population ages with no families with children to replace them. In recent years the increase of Filipino and Samoan families, each with several children, has put the issue on the backburner for now. However, there is not an apparent way that the Begich Towers could support the town through such a breaking point. The town relies on young people, the tower, and a good

economy with jobs. With one leg missing, the town seems doomed to fade. The best social indicator of the town is that they have survived the military leaving, an earthquake, and several decades; with tourism and job opportunities running strong, it seems they can survive many more.

1.3 Social Aspects:

People in Whittier seems content and happy. The pace of life in Alaska is slower, more simple. For the director of the towers, that was by choice. He talked about how he preferred the community and pacing of small towns, and that is one reason he chose to move to Whittier originally. The idea of vertical community really seems to work here. People talk to each other in the elevator. People stroll, bike, and even unicycle(!) around town. The 4th of July Parade filled the street with children and their parents, pacing along the sports cars and jeeps that threw out candy. The basketball court seems to be constantly humming with kids enjoying the cool summer. Social interaction is hardly forced, though. There is an attitude of privacy and reservedness, almost standoffishness, in Alaskan manners that likely keeps people contentedly indoors and to themselves.

Conclusions:

Supportive Architecture is responsive architecture, flexible to the changing needs, ideas, and habits of those who use it. This building invites small businesses to run on the first floor or even from peoples' apartments. When the all-white concrete exterior was considered a bit too bleak, it received a tasteful coat of paint. When a church was needed, the old swimming pool was removed to accommodate. When someone needed more space, apartments were combined to create a five bedroom home. It seems there is little the building could not accommodate. It supports the community it holds. Through the clean layout and sufficient physical, social, and lifestyle amenities, the building becomes a master of functionality, with a simple form that follows.

Notes:

1) Website homepage, www.whittieralaskachamber.org/city-of-whittier-alaska/. Accessed 10 December 2021.

2) Google. (n.d.). [Map of Alaska and Western Canada]. Retrieved December 17, 2021, from www.google.com/maps/place/Whittier,+AK+99693/@59.3650409,-149.6205226,2372371m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x56b81ad99e929553:0xf6d71b0f8e5d2ee2!8m2!3d60.7730556!4d-148.6838888.

3) Google. (n.d.). [Map of Whittier, Alaska]. Retrieved December 17, 2021, from https://www.google.com/maps/place/Whittier,+AK+99693/@60.7748589,-148.6934599,1706m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x56b81ad99e929553:0xf6d71b0f8e5d2ee2!8m2!3d60.7730556!4d-148.6838888.

4) ”Visiting Whittier.” //www.whittieralaska.gov/visiting/. Accessed 1 November 2021.

5) “History.” begichtowers.com/history.html. Accessed 21 September 2021.

6) “Whittier History.” www.alaska.org/detail/whittier-history. Accessed 21 September 2021.

7) Taylor, Alan. *The Strangest Town in Alaska*. Todd Communications, 2011, pp. 66.

8) “History.” begichtowers.com/history.html. Accessed 21 September 2021.

9) Taylor, Alan. *The Strangest Town in Alaska*. Todd Communications, 2011, pp. 64.

Grow Dat Youth Farm



Fig. 01. Approach to Grow Dat.[1]

Introduction:

For the past 10 years, Grow Dat Youth Farm in New Orleans has drawn together a diverse range of students, equipping them with leadership skills, food and health literacy, and farming. This vibrant ecosystem has been masterfully planned to meet programmatic needs, and all while using the most affordable materials. Both the program and the architecture have gained acclaim for addressing food desert problems while creating space for youth to gain the skills and confidence needed for New Orleans’s future generations of leaders, thinkers, and activists.

History, Founding, and Function:

The success of Grow Dat is as a story of social and professional networks intersecting to generate architecture. Grow Dat began around 2011 as a partnership between local leaders and resources. Johanna Gilligan was a leader at the New Orleans Farm and Food Network when the president of Tulane University approached her about her community-based food-justice work and wanted to see it do even more for the community. Johanna, using the resources within the architecture and entrepreneur departments of Tulane, began to construct the idea that would become Grow Dat Youth Farm. Johanna worked alongside Emilie Taylor Welty at the Small Center, a design incubator that partners with Tulane and is oriented towards aiding in the vision-planning and design for community-drive non-profits in New Orleans.[2]



Fig. 02. Design Studio at the Small Center, New Orleans. Photo by author, 2021.

With the help of student interns, the studio at the Small Center took on the work of designing the campus for Grow Dat. At the wish of a donor, the design utilized shipping containers. City Park of New Orleans was identified as a viable site for the future farm. City Park

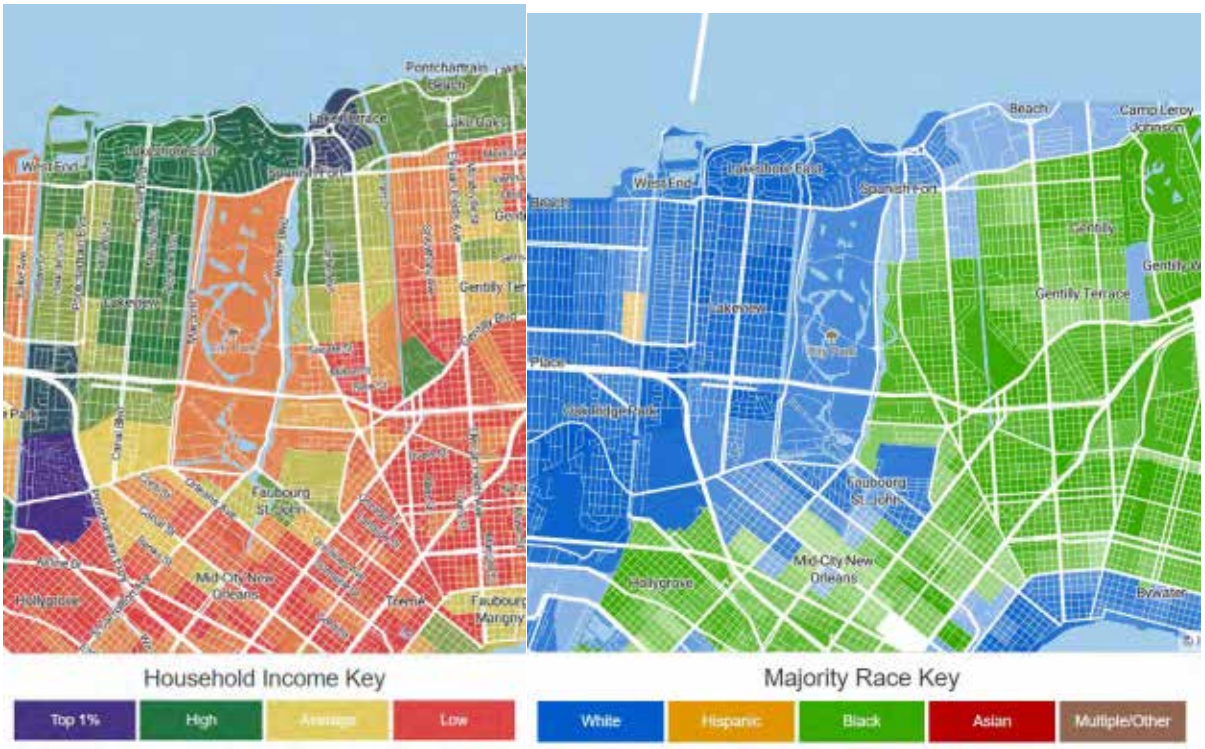
is a beautiful 150-year-old park encompassing some 1,300 acres, making it considerably larger than Central Park in New York City. The location appeared more desirable because of its dire state. Hurricane Katrina had ravaged one of City Park's golf courses, and that was chosen for the site of Grow Dat.[3] The gardens now emerge from the old fairways.



Fig. 03. Context of Grow Dat within New Orleans.[4]



Fig. 04. Site Context of Grow Dat Farm.[5]



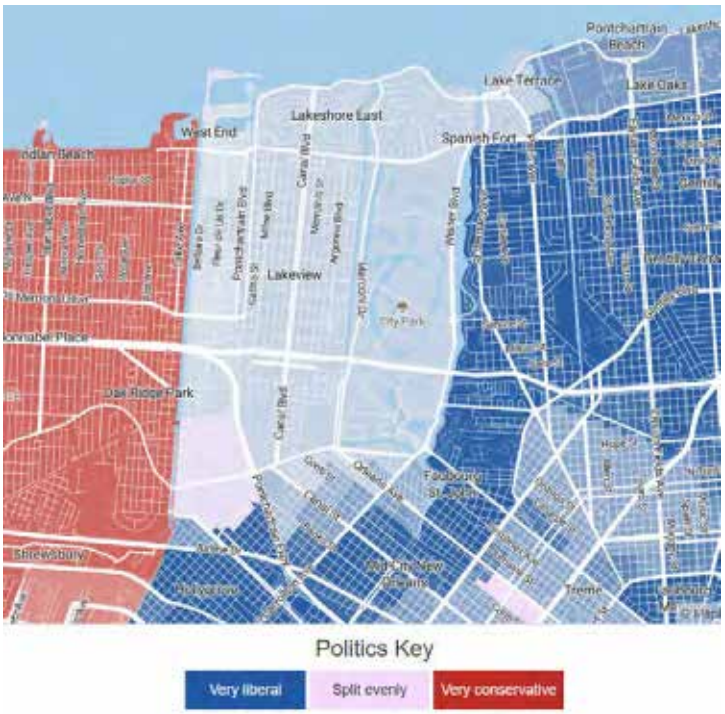


Fig. 05. Income range around City Park (pictured in orange).[6]

Fig. 06. Race dynamics around City Park (pictured in blue).[7]

Fig. 07. Political divide surrounding Grow Dat (pictured in gray).[8]

Presently, the program trains high-school-aged volunteers in a rich learning environment. One set of roughly thirty students goes through Grow Dat's during the spring and summer. The student volunteers are paid for their work on the farm, providing them wholesome, educational work experience where they are seen not as employees, but as students and individuals. In the cool of the morning, they go out into the gardens in teams to plant, grow, or harvest the produce. While one or two teams work out in the gardens, another team works in the kitchen, preparing a fresh lunch using food from the garden. All the teams meet in the central classroom for lunch. After working together to clean up food and dishes and fold away tables, the rooms, balconies, and courtyards of the campus becomes a series of classrooms for afternoon program. Grow Dat employees and young staff members, former campers themselves, lead afternoon programs. The programs involve discussing food issues such as food deserts and redlining, sustainability, healthy eating, and financial management. When the youth go home, they can take food home, bringing healthy food back to their families and communities.

The environment of Grow Dat is upbeat and playful. For example, while picking tomatoes, students take turns playing music on a Bluetooth speaker and sing popular music together. The routines of work, eating, and learning together create an environment where students feel themselves and share ideas and perspectives.

The Design:

The urban planning and architectural dimensions of the project work in harmony to support the program of Grow Dat. The positioning of the site in the city makes for a central location, being 15 minutes from downtown New Orleans. Because it is in between different demographic neighborhoods, it was considered a neutral zone, welcoming to all New Orleanians (refer to figures 05-07). The architecture creates an excellent environment for farming and learning, with attention paid to light, air, and materials that creates a comfortable place for the community members to learn and grow at the site, before they go out into the world to distribute food, knowledge, and leadership back into their communities.

Situated on 5 acres of land, the architecture of Grow Dat Youth Farm responds well to the needs of the institution, the community, the ecological climate, and the budget of a small non-profit.

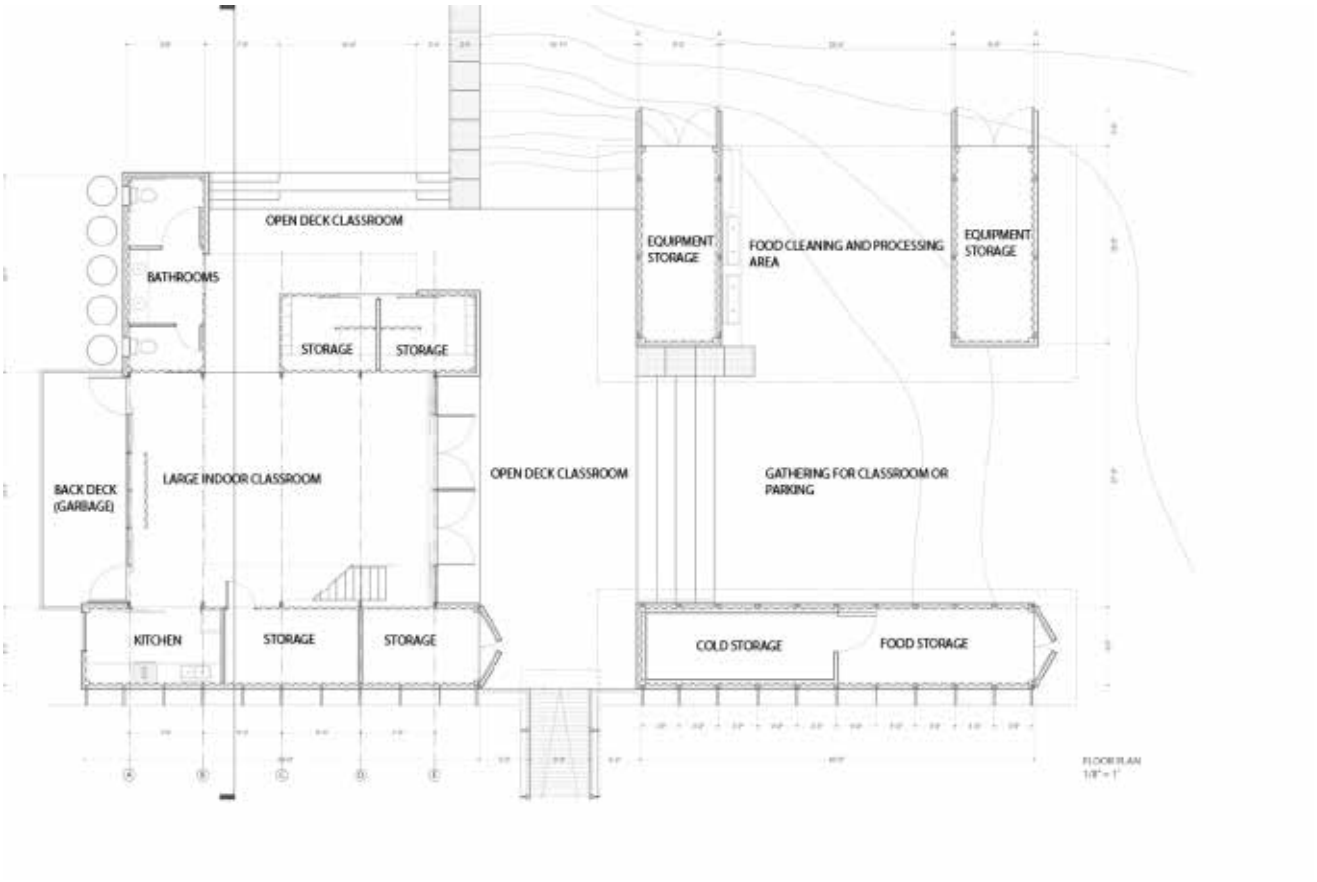


Fig 08. The first-floor plan showing the interior layout. Photo courtesy of Emilie Taylor, approx. 2011. Text by author.

The arrangement of Grow Dat's architecture is crucial to its successful functioning. The campus of Grow Dat follows a cluster organization strategy, composed of a series of shipping containers and roofs which contain central classroom spaces and courtyards. This creates usable outdoor spaces between shipping containers while allowing breezes to cool the complex down during humid days.

The attitude towards light also supports a more comfortable user experience. Natural, light comes in from almost everywhere. For example, the bathroom stalls use white plastic walls to filter natural

light through. The sink is open to the outdoors. Except for the shipping containers, no space is enclosed on all four sides with walls. This receptiveness to light and air creates a space that is healthy and pleasant to be in.

The shipping containers enclose programmatic spaces like storage, bathrooms, and offices, while loose classrooms intermingle throughout the site, making everywhere a place for community interaction and education. Wooden decks connect the shipping containers and create flexible gathering spaces between offices, bathrooms, and storage rooms. The flow of the space feels informal, inviting, and meandering.

The arrangement takes spaces and assigns them new meaning. Hallways disappear, and decks become space for community; stairwells vanish. A wide ramp leads up to the complex, with a stairway to the second stair surrounded by a sun-defensive vine wall. Even conventional classrooms slip away in favor of picnic benches and loose chairs gathered around shade trees, steps, rock walls, a mezzanine, and the central gathering room. The quality of architecture supports those passing through Grow Dat.

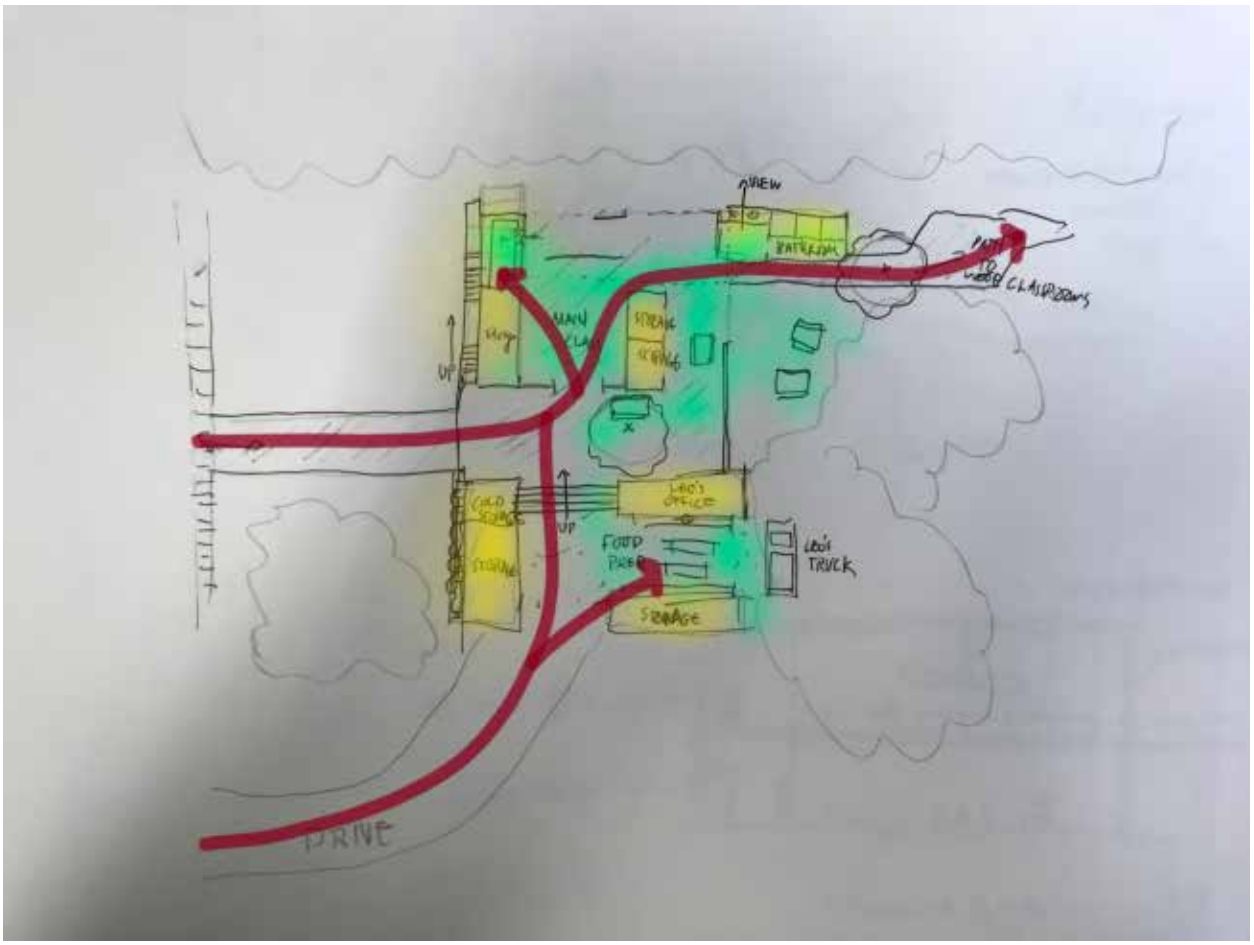


Fig 9. Sketch diagram of the sequence through the site. The yellow represents enclosed structures while the green represents open structures. Diagram by author, 2021.

The logic of the sequencing through the complex contributes to its success as well. At the end of the gravel drive there are the shipping containers that house food storage, as well as the food processing area. This arrangement makes it easy for food distribution to take place, like a loading dock. In the center of the complex, a grand ramp starts at the sidewalk and traverses some 90’ before joining a wood deck. The deck divides the complex into administrative and education on the left of the ramp approach, and production and farming equipment on the right of the ramp approach. A small tree

pokes through the central decking, blocking views deeper into the interior, which breaks off into outdoor classrooms and the beginning of a nature trail. The complex exists at three elevations, with the farm and storage at the ground level, the main classroom and kitchen elevated a few steps, and the second story houses offices and a balcony that functions as a classroom. The organization of the space is lovely and engaging. Although a simple rectangular arrangement in plan view, in experience, it feels like a rambling, Old World village, or a small version of the French Quarter in New Orleans. The narrow shipping containers feel like row houses, the shaded decking and in between spaces feel like winding streets and alleys. The double heigh classroom, lined with a balcony, feels just like standing on Ann Street along Jackson Square, with balconies, public space, and old tree canopies working together to create a comfortable space to linger for a while. The smells of the kitchen contribute to the effect, making it feel like a restaurant or street vendor must be around the corner. The whole effect is delightful, making it an ideal space to gather for events from the scale of a 5-6 people to a 40 person dinner.

The structure of the building also responds to its context and culture to support the success of Grow Dat. The structure must tread lightly on the ground because City Park is owned by the city, which might reclaim the land at some point. To that end, the shipping containers rest on corner foundations, the between spaces are wooden decking which could be torn out. The large floor of the classroom relies on a metal support structure, recycled from a construction

waste post Katrina, that suspends the concrete floor above the ground, avoiding a poured slab. cleaned. A septic tank couldn’t easily be built given the high-water table. In response, the sewage is managed through a composting toilet that outlets into a semi-sunken tank that can easily be cleaned.

Additionally, this keeps the central part of the complex raised above the ground to mitigate the disruptive effects of flooding. The design of the foundation reduces the amount of time it would take to relocate by simply making the rooms containers that could be lifted from the foundations and taken elsewhere.

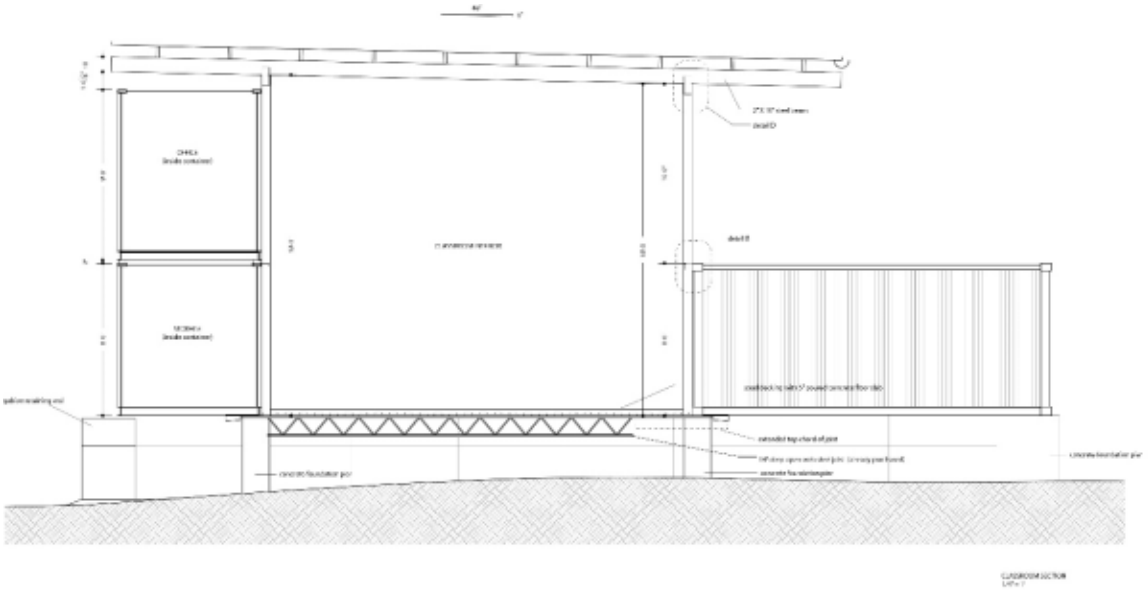


Fig 10. Section of the large classroom. Note the steel structure supporting the concrete floor, as well as the concrete pillars the shipping containers rest on. Photo courtesy of Emilie Taylor, approx. 2011.



Fig. 11. The compositing toilet bathroom. Photo by author, 2021.

Fig. 12. The septic tank behind. Photo by author, 2021.

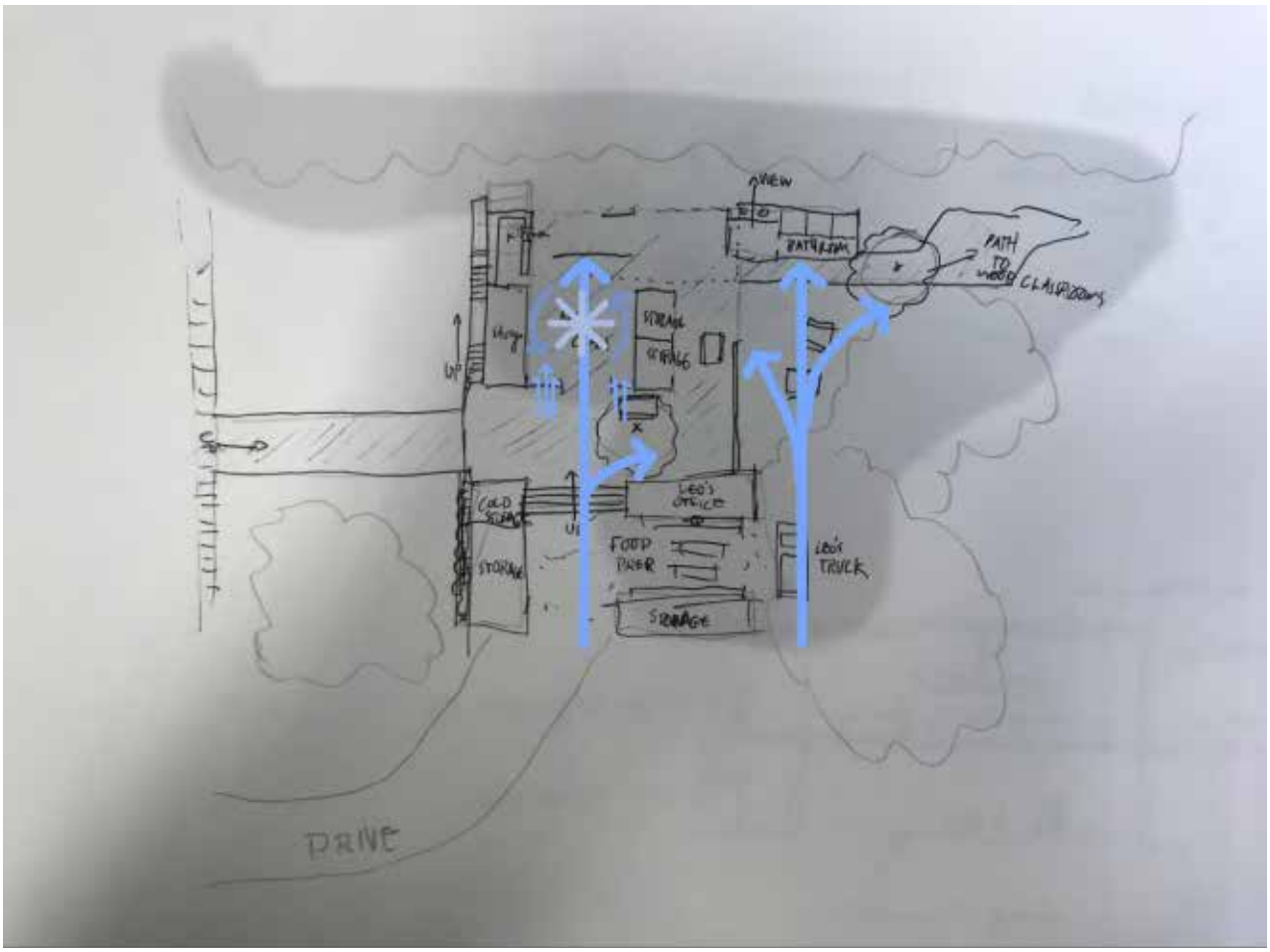
The materials of the complex are simple and affordable. Shipping containers, concrete pillar corner foundations, 2x4 wood decking, corrugated steel roofing, and a few coats of paint work together to create a masterfully planned space that is comfortable and exciting to be in. Expensive construction considerations like mechanical systems, glass, framing, and even furniture are minimal. The material choice feels grounded and human, and the openness adds a richness to the space. It is fascinating how much utility is captured with such raw materials in a space that is such high quality.

The design attitude towards temperature supports afternoon classes such that even in June in near-tropical New Orleans, students can focus. It also reduces heavy dependence on air conditioning and

keeps the energy costs to a minimum. The roofs are arranged carefully to cover core spaces like classrooms, offices, and the food processing area from sun and rain. The roofs are discontinued over the decks, allowing light to spread more evenly into the complex. Even the original trees of the site were kept, shading most of the site while allowing gentle dappled light to filter through. Mechanical cooling is kept to two window units in the offices, a Big Ass fan in the main classroom, and a mechanically cooled freezer room for the produce. In addition to the Big Ass fan, the main classroom uses a wood screen, constructed with dozens of individual wood slats, to allow breezes and some light to pass through while keeping most of the hot direct sun out. This simple piece of design makes the main gathering area comfortable, with breezes and indirect light passing through. One additional design moment is in using green walls along the south side of the building. During the summer, the vines grow along a stainless steel mesh trellis structure and block heat along the shipping container walls.



Fig 13. The sunscreen that provides air flow into the interior. Grow Dat Farm, New Orleans. Photo by author, 2021.



Stairs and walkways run alongside the south walls of the complex, dividing the green wall and the building. This keeps space inside the complex more open for programs to take place while creating a temperate walkway and a dynamic stair condition of walking along the rustling leaves of the trellis. The green wall also provides a noise barrier from Interstate 610, a busy road only 250 feet from the complex.

The roofs lift above the shipping containers by about a foot, trapping the heat in an air pocket so the interior spaces stay cooler.



The central classroom serves as the most important hub, providing a space for gathering, teaching, cooking, and eating. It is the true “living room” of the complex. A double-height void interrupts the wooden sunscreen that shades the south facade, creating a grand entry into the space. The interior space breaks off into the kitchen, where fresh food is washed and prepared. The room lacks doors, so instead two voids open to a back porch, where the trash cans and compost bins are stored. Another void opens to provide access to the bathrooms. Above, a balcony wraps around, low enough and open enough that people can see each other and talk back and forth, while private enough that you could have a side conversation up on the balcony without those below hearing every word. The openness between spaces fosters casual

social interactions almost like a campsite or outdoor festival would. The connectedness creates an environment that feels safer, too. You can see people in other rooms or see cars pulling up. During afternoon educational lessons, you can hear conversation in other spaces in a way that makes the complex feel like a fun outdoor event.

This space molds and shifts throughout the day, week, and year as program demands. It is always buzzing with activity. The space feels cozy, almost like a nest. The natural wood materials feel earthy and warm. The space is clean and orderly, set for the next activity. It is big enough to feel grand while small enough not to feel alienating. Hearing conversations in neighboring spaces makes for lively background noise. The space feels dynamic, with the movement of the fan against the gridded roof structure, the lights strung across the space overhead, breaking up the height. The effect of the room creates a comfortable and memorable experience for users such that they are able to really engage in the activities at hand, learning new things and having conversations that will stick with them as they go back out into their communities, trained to be better, healthier citizens.



Fig 16. The main classroom, which is a semi-indoor flexible space. Grow Dat Farm, New Orleans. Photo by author, 2021.



Fig 17. The social philosophy is written on the wall. Photo by author, 2021.

The aesthetic of the architecture fosters community through its unique character, which is not directly in reference to another social architecture. The design does not look like a school, a town hall, or a church. It doesn't evoke a particular image with attached associations. Even inside the complex, the classrooms are not large drab rooms with a few small windows; instead, they classes meet on porches and balconies or under awnings. Students can choose where to sit, and the design promotes individuality.

Architecturally, the site works because it is highly responsive to the end users. It was designed with a concern for their needs, comfort, and pleasure. It is a site reminiscent of the Eames' idea of innovative design not as products, but as "gifts." It is a place not only oriented towards the needs of the users, but through supporting the farm food justice program, it also supports the larger community of New Orleans. By responding to the social fabric of New Orleans, understanding design needs through a social lens, Grow Dat has provided a satisfactory answer to food deserts and youth development that has made it widely popular in the community.

The architecture of the place fosters personal growth and empowerment. Grow Dat gives the users the space to grow into themselves. One camp leader talked about how he found a love for teaching through the program and had decided to pursue that as a career. Another increased her confidence in speaking up and making her voice heard. Yet another camp leader talked about how the program had been a safe place where she worked through her social anxiety and

other mental health issues. One student mentioned access to better food, which helped resolve certain dietary issues. For several, Grow Dat has been a safe place to talk about and express their gender identity and sexuality. Grow Dat has touched the lives of the many young people who have passed through the program.

Grow Dat succeeds in being a positive place that supports the youth by providing a comfortable environment, balancing durability with the light and air of an indoor space that invites nature in. Grow Dat is an architecture fueled by its mission to people, specific to its place, intentional in program.

Notes:

1) *Grow Dat Rendering*. Approx 2011. growdatyouthfarm.org, accessed 18 December 2021.

2) Taylor Welty, Emilie. Interview. By Isaac Haynes. 07 June 2021.

3) Taylor Welty, Emilie. Interview. By Isaac Haynes. 07 June 2021.

4) Google.(n.d.).[Map of New Orleans].Retrieved December 18, 2021,from https://www.google.com/maps/@29.9489376,90.1155549,10842m/data=!3m1!1e3

5) Google.(n.d.).[Map of New Orleans].Retrieved December 18, 2021,from https://www.google.com/maps/@29.9944197,90.0927175,204m/data=!3m1!1e3

6) Map of Household Income from *Race, Diversity, and Ethnicity in New Orleans, LA*. bestneighborhood.org, accessed 18 December 2021.

7) Map of Majority Race. *Race, Diversity, and Ethnicity in New Orleans, LA*. bestneighborhood.org, accessed 18 December 2021.

8) Map of Politics. *Race, Diversity, and Ethnicity in New Orleans, LA*. bestneighborhood.org, accessed 18 December 2021.

Introduction:

Epicenter is a nonprofit in rural Green River, Utah, that proposes a way of engaging with architecture that is highly specific to local needs, desires, contexts, and history of Green River. By spending years studying the cultural dialogue and visual language of a community, Epicenter has been able to provide custom solutions tailored to the community's vision. The headquarters of Epicenter demonstrate the importance of an architectural planning center for a community, driven by the community and not merely by business interest. This building houses, supports, and reflects that vision, while the portfolio of Epicenter shows us how different ways in which these ideas of architecture can support community.



Fig. 1. Epicenter, Green River, Utah. Photo by Author, 2021.

History:

In interviews, Maria Sykes shared about the history of Green River. Green River, Utah was founded in the 1800s as a place to cross the turbulent Green River. As rail lines and later highways were constructed, Green River received traffic and commerce and, like so many other desert towns, seemed to spring from the desert: a flourishing metropolis. In the 1950s and 60s, a military base and uranium mine kept the city booming. When the mine closed and the military moved out, jobs disappeared. Residents left. Interstate 70 was built in the 1960s near Green River, causing the road traffic and tourism through to further decrease. Many youth leave for college and don't return. With no definite future and only vague hopes of future industry, the town with a population of about 900 continues to fade away.

Maria Sykes, Epicenter's founder, first visited Green River on an AmeriCorps visa. She became passionate about the life and character of the town, and upon graduating from Auburn's architecture program, she returned in 2009 to establish Epicenter. Epicenter's philosophy was that Green River was a town worth fighting for, living in, and celebrating, and design had a place in that fight. Epicenter started by focusing on the "Fix it First" program, which provided direct support to Green River residents with small repairs and construction projects: ADA ramps, energy efficient windows, and roof repairs. As Epicenter developed, it began to serve as the central hub for gathering people to plan, design, and build Green River's future based

on the input of locals. Art installations, public events, master planning, and architectural projects emerged, united under one philosophy. Epicenter continues to maintain the small town feel of Green River while uplifting the face of the town. The humble storefront building has become the physical, architectural solution to disparate ideas and resources within the community, creating a space to define the goals of the community and to act upon them.





Fig. 2. Regional Context of Green River, Utah.[1]

Fig. 3. Epicenter within Green River.[2]

The Architecture:

The organization strategy of Epicenter's architecture is that of a single point, an epicenter. This creates order in the social fabric of Green River by drawing together and concentrating people, ideas, and resources to one place, creating an efficient strategy for planning and acting. In the past, the only outlet for proposing ideas was through the town council, which had limited power and funding to act and was not always open to listening to suggestions. As a private firm with grant funding and a deep commitment to the well-being of the town, the interests of citizens could be better heard and responded to.

The starting point for understanding this social context of architecture is through studying Epicenter's small brick storefront. The small building reflects the larger design moves of the community. Through studying the work of Epicenter, we better understand the depth of meaning behind the building, the community, and the social fabric of Green River.

It sits at the end of the block on Broadway Street, one of the main streets through Green River, signaling its importance in the community fabric. The building houses office space on the first floor and a creative lounge workspace in the basement. The 20' x 40' building was abandoned and in rough shape when Maria and her team took on the project of renovating it themselves for use as studio and office space. From the beginning, Since the beginning Epicenter has been responsive to the culture and methods of the region, an attention

to local values that has grown since Epicenter's founding. Although an old building, the desert lends objects to reuse. The dry desert heat prevents things from deteriorating quickly, and because resources are scarcer, it is common culturally to repurpose and reuse things, including architecture, rather than to tear down or build new.

Through cleaning up the building, including historical signage, and adding value to the historic structure, Epicenter uses a historical building to graft itself into the identity and narrative of the town. The Green River citizens are proud of the handsome building and of the work being done within. The historic context lends itself to the notion that the design for the future is rooted in a love for Green River's past, which makes citizens feel included in the work of designing the future of their town. The specific history of the building is that is was formerly a bank, a construction company office, and a bar that, according to local legend, notorious train robber Butch Cassidy and his gang frequented. The reuse of a culturally significant building and maintenance of its material reflects a value of Green River's identity. It serves to offset decay while preserving a piece of Green River's history. It is a move towards stewardship of a town's resources.

The sturdy little building is of its cultural and geographical climate. It functions well in the desert environment, where construction materials are more expensive and anything very large requires extensive air conditioning. The compact structure provides a simple space for supporting Epicenter's work, which in turn supports

the community. The building is flexible to change. It could expand more efficiently into the basement, or it could shrink to one corner. It is a physically resilient building that has made it through many years, even years of neglect. It supports the dialogue Epicenter seeks by keeping discussion in one room of designers, supporting transparency and collaboration.



Fig 3. Historic buildings of Broadway Street. Construction by author, 2021.



Fig 4. Sketch of Epicenter’s Floor Plan, by author, 2021.





Fig. 3. Epicenter’s desk space. Photo by author, 2021.
Fig. 4. The conference table, photo by author, 2021.

The exterior is simple. The front facade is a glass store front with a shade structure extending over the sidewalk. An old tree provides shade in front of the building. The façade of the building has events pinned up to act as a billboard of events for the community. The front is a white, more-highly crafted brick block, with “EPICENTER” in bold over the door while the other three sides of the building are a rough, brown brick block, layered with murals. The current painted lettering, facing the Amtrack stop some 400 feet away, reads, “YOU ARE HERE”. The bathroom extends from the north wall. Out the back door of the office is a small tool shed. Through the practical craft of signage, Epicenter understands and appreciates the history and culture of Green River while adding its own voice. On the south side, facing the Amtrack station some steps away, block lettering that messages “YOU ARE HERE” to arriving passengers layers ontop of other old signs, one reading “BILLIARD ROOM,” “COLD DRINK,” “GROCERIES,” and a few others that are less legible. This layering signage gives homage to the decades of culture that have shaped the

street and the building. The sign is painted on. As the sign ages and the needs and residents of, Epicenter change and leave, the sign will fade into the wall, adding itself to the history, and predicting a future for the building and for Green River.

This interior organization of Epicenter’s building reflects the creative and social process of Epicenter’s firm, with community meetings taking center stage, backed by research and precedent, and the hard work as a peripheral support. The interior opens into a one room office. A conference table is centered in the room. Behind the table, a bookshelf holds pamphlets, publications, and books about Green River. Many were written by Maria or folks within Epicenter. Around the periphery of the space, 5 desks are arranged for working, with Maria at the back of the room. The interior organization of the basement is more freeform, allowing for creative work to take place. Couches, old drafting tables, architecture models, and a coffee counter create an informal space for gathering. This is where casual employee brainstorming sessions happen.

The interior feels rooted in history and comfort. The floors of the space are original, worn with use. Original tin ceiling tiles and crown molding decorate the walls and ceiling. Single bulbs make up for the lighting not provided by the eastern sunlight. To keep the space comfortable, harsh light is kept to a minimum and heat is slow to warm up the stone building. Small windows in the basement let in light from above. On the ground floor level, ample light comes in through the eastern glass storefront. With work starting around 9am, the light is

not too harsh. Throughout the day, most of the light is blocked, with only one small western window. This keeps the building cool throughout the day. The ceilings are high, allowing heat to rise. The tight building envelope is resistant to temperature extremes, providing just the space and comfort needed. The outside, painted white, keeps the structure cool.



The social posture of the architecture is open and receptive. The door is unlocked during business hours and the glass is transparent from the outside. This open posture is supplemented by the attitudes of the staff, who are friendly and welcoming to local residents. As such, the experience of the building becomes feels inviting to stop by and enter, and people do. Almost twice a day, Clients, local leaders, or out of town visitors drop in to meet with Maria or just to stop by and visit. With the table in the center of the room, the space centers conversations between Epicenter’s designers and community members as they build relationships and discuss the future of Green River. Being open to the room allows others to listen and chime in, creating an informal environment that quite literally centers conversations and dialogue.

The Work of Epicenter:

The central office of Epicenter has been a place for research and gathering. Staff go out to measure the needs of the community, then analyze and publish their findings to generate a plan in response to the community voice. These interventions are proposed on many scales with the understanding that this place is an ecosystem.

After the big economic drivers of Green River moved out, few houses were built, creating a lack of affordable housing. According to research Epicenter conducted within the community, many people live in dilapidated trailers from the 70s or 80s. In response, Epicenter developed the Frontier House, a model of affordable housing for Green River. In an interview with Maria Sykes. Epicenter is now developing a 6-house complex adjacent to the new pocket park to respond to the housing need. The 6 houses will be modeled off of the Frontier house, with 3 privately owned and 3 rented.

The experience of public discourse within Epicenter’s office heightened the realization that informal public spaces were crucial to the social health of this small community, where knowing your neighbors is what gives the community strength. Epicenter is working to take some acreage of unused overgrowth, where the riverbed was before it switched course, and turn it into a public walking trail. Another recent project Epicenter is the redevelopment of a corner lot for a public pocket park two streets over from the office. It consists of 15 old trees along a creek branch of the Green River with trails.

One matriarch of Green River recalls it being a park decades ago, giving the site both social value and historical value.

These projects are taking place on many scales and in differing mediums. The recognition and appreciation of history through the visual signage continues through art in the town. Specifically, one sign that Epicenter built just west of town uses Route 66 road trip style imagery from Green River's 1960s heyday to evoke a nostalgia for travelers while providing others with an "Instagram moment" to photograph and post online, which doubles as free advertising for the city. The sign also works to bring into town those travelers who are stopping off to get gas. It has been measurably successful at increasing traffic flow into Green River. Art and repurposing buildings also come to play in town, in particular with two old sheds which have been painted with the colors and imagery of the desert. These small structures offset some of the blight and decay upon the approach to town, creating a livelier and more intriguing atmosphere. Even small moves like this can do a lot of work in creating a community that feels more vibrant.



Fig 6, Welcome sign art, photo by author, 2021.



Fig. 7. Painted shed to reflect colors, wind, and elements of the desert. Photo by author, 2021.

Fig. 8. Painted shed to reflect the rock formations of the area. Photo by author, 2021.



Fig. 9. Park development. A stack of rocks for a path sits in front of the grove of trees. Photo by author, 2021.



Fig 10. The white house (far right) follows the form of local buildings, while providing a housing to replace the derelict trailer homes in the community (right). Construct by author, 2021.

The art and architecture produced by Epicenter supports Green River through creating a more vibrant, lively, and hopeful vision for the town. The projects add to the character of the town while blending into the historical narrative.

Conclusions:

Experimenting with community design has been an art form, involving creative imagining and exploration. The work has not always been well received by the community, with many residents of Green River initially skeptical of the character and intentions of those at Epicenter. This was particularly true when proposals missed the heart of what Green River was about, appearing too trendy and gentrifying the city rather than building upon its history. The solution to skepticism and mistakes comes back to the conference table and its symbolism; open dialogue between designers, dreamers, and community members is crucial in building relationships founded on trust, hope, and confidence. These relationships underly the success of Epicenter by providing the clearest picture of what Green River needs for its success. Community trust has been built socially and architecturally. Maria bought a house in Green River to settle down. In settling down, people saw she cared about the community and was invested in it. Architecturally, the design and aesthetics of the main office to the context and precedent of its surroundings and its socially-oriented layout create continuity and respect of Green River that shows a value and appreciation of the town on the part of the designers. By tying

itself to that cultural landscape, Epicenter’s humble building communicates that if speaks for Green River and believes in the town. This powerful move, reinforced by Epicenter’s successful projects, has built real trust, and added real value to the town. Epicenter integrates itself into the voice and collective vision of the community.

Notes:

1) Google. (n.d.). [Map of Western U.S.]. Retrieved December 18, 2021, from https://www.google.com/maps/@37.3878958,-109.2351734,1560441m/data=!3m1!1e3

2) Google. (n.d.). [Map of Green River, Utah]. Retrieved December 19, https://www.google.com/maps/@38.9992741,-110.1532008,7173m/data=!3m1!1e3

The Bowery Mission

A Demonstration of Architecture as a Network of Buildings.



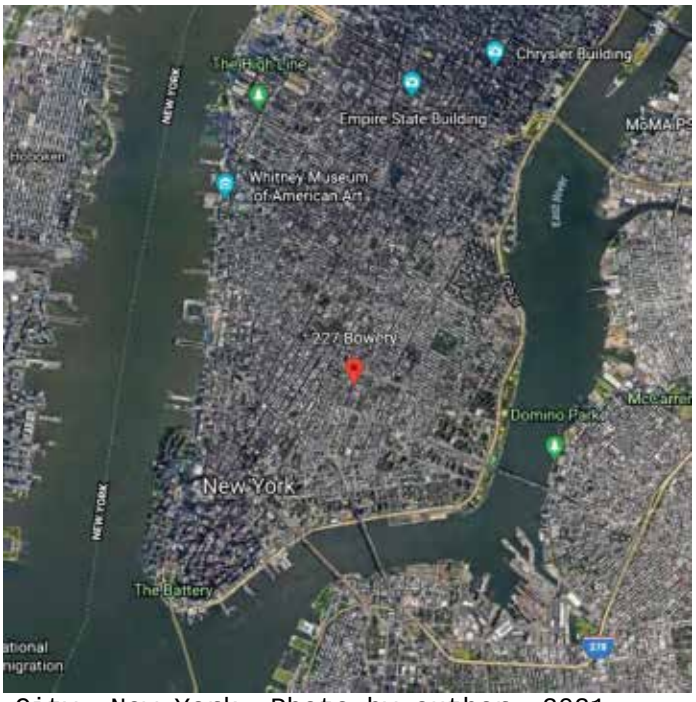


Fig. 01. Bowery Mission, New York City, New York. Photo by author, 2021.
Fig. 02. Location within Manhattan.[1]

Introduction:

The Bowery Mission at 227 Bowery street stands in formation along rows of Italianate buildings as traffic rumbles past. The Bowery area has been notorious since the late 1800s for being a rougher part of town, packed with flop houses. As the Bowery neighborhood has slowly gentrified over the past three or four decades, luxury apartments have risen above the streets. The juxtaposition of wealth and poverty highlights the Bowery's place in the culture, with SANAA's New Museum mere steps away from the Bowery Mission, one of the oldest Christian rescue missions in New York City.[2]

The Bowery Mission stands indifferent to the fashions of development. It opens every day, as it has for more than 100 years, to provided crucial support to New York's homeless population through its soup kitchen, rehabilitation center, and multipurpose chapel.[3] It has earned the reputation for being the cities' most successful shelters, with lodging in upper floors and the chapel serving as an emergency warming shelter in extreme temperatures. Across the city, opening church sanctuaries for people who are homeless and poor, once a common practice, is a dying tradition. Homeless folks often have nowhere to belong, and often not even the streets, due to policing. The Bowery is a rare refuge for those economically and socially isolated from the private business world of the city. In studying the architecture, we may understand what design principles, methods, and approaches have contributed to its success at supporting such a fragile community for such a long time.

The Bowery is organized as a system of buildings spread across the city. This provides access to resources to disparate pockets of the population, relieves stress on one central building to be all for all people. In that chain, 227 Bowery is unique in being the oldest and most renowned Bowery location still in use.

In is current state, the Bowery makes several simple but powerful design moves involving adaptability, durability, and easy wayfinding.

History:

The Bowery Mission was founded in 1879 by Mr. and Mrs. Rev Ruliffson. As social gospel activists, the Ruliffsons sought to combat poverty and suffering for New York's residents. The location of 227 Bowery was selected strategically, as Bowery Street has been a notorious skid row for much of its history and thus was the community in the most need of assistance with basic services of food and shelter.[4]



Fig. 03. Bowery Street, New York City, New York. Photo by author, 2021.

Architecture:

227 Bowery was designed in 1876 as a coffin factory by New York architect William Jose.[5] It was made for undertaker Jonas Stolts.

Architect William Jose was known for his intricate details, and the neo-grec façade is no exception, decorated with fine stone work, arches, and brick patterning. The facade was altered in 1908-9 on behalf of the Bowery to include stained glass windows and a gothic-revival chapel. The half-timbered Tudor Revival structure on the second story, inlaid with stained glass, depicts the story of the prodigal son. In the Christian story, the prodigal son leaves his father and ends up homeless and hungry before returning to his father, who welcomes him with open arms.[6] This nod towards the patrons the Bowery extends an embracing welcome to all who enter. The chapel interiors are quite grand, like an urban palace for the people within. The space was designed to feel welcoming, like an English inn, with warm lighting pouring from gothic chandeliers onto the heavy wooden rafters.



Fig. 04. 227 Bowery (right). New York City, New York. Photo by author, 2021.

Adaptability:

The interior rooms of 227 Bowery lend themselves to flexibility. Upon entry through the reception vestibule, The left front door opens into the dining hall, roughly 25’ wide and 60’ deep. a tiled room with a serving window at the far end. Space is limited, but ample for lines of tables where people can eat and talk together, inside and out of the elements. The dining room is humble, stripped of any ornamentation. The simple arrangement makes processing hundreds of people through the space each day efficient, straightforward, and easy to clean up after. The collapsible tables and stackable chairs make the space easy to transform.



Fig. 05. Bowery Mission, New York City, New York. Photo by Sanna Chu, localeastvillage.com

In the neighboring building, connected by a hall, 227 opens directly into the chapel. Users are welcomed into a room of ornate gothic woodwork, chandeliers, carved stone walls, and pipe organ make the space feel grand and lively. The elegance and the permanence of 227 Bowery communicates to the users that they are people worthy to be in these spaces, spaces that are glorified. That said, the ground is a durable red tile, like a restaurant. The walls are unadorned below eye level, keeping the space durable, free of hazards, and making it easy to clean. In a 2018 renovation, the pews were removed, stripping the usable space to its core needs and opening up more flexible floor space. With a fixed stage at the far end, the hall is adaptable to program needs, be they warming shelters, dinners, services, or more. The current arrangement sees a pop up stage pushed to the left wall, with chairs scattered around it. At first reckoning, the move to tear historic pews and stage furniture, and replace them with a cluster of plastic chairs and a pop up stage, seems tragic. A closer look reveals a clever reason for it. The arrangement recenters attention away from a pulpit focal point, with a speaker talking at the silent masses. It turns attention back on the people. As people casually circle up against the pop up stage, some sitting some standing, the services become conversational, with folks able to speak back and forth with those on stage.



Fig. 06. The Chapel at the Bowery. Photo by author, 2021.

For the Bowery design centers on humans and human experience. In the Christian Bible, Jesus washes his disciples' feet as a posture of humility, similarly, the lowering of the stage, the recentering of the attention.

Durability:

The materials of the Bowery are tough: the floors of the chapel and the dining room are tiled. The back rooms have concrete floors. The walls of the chapel are stone. The stone interiors were originally used because they were fireproof, which was particularly important after the 1898 inferno of Bowery's former location.[7] Investing in sturdy materials for community hubs also simply helps them age better, with the chapel undergoing minor renovations and looking virtually identical to its original form.

One nuance of durability is through the portable outhouses outside. Providing these two bathrooms for the public to use keeps the space outside clean while avoiding a constant flow of people in and out that would interrupt program. It is a solution to basic hygiene that is simple, direct, and sustainable over the long term.

The exterior façade carries durability, not only through the durability of brick and small, standard sized windows, but also an aesthetic durability. The façade was designed with an attention to detail that creates an elegant face of the Bowery. This is something that people value and appreciate, so much so in fact that in 2012 the building received landmark status by the City of New York, both for its cultural as well as architectural significance. By keeping the interior rough and functional while keeping the façade traditionally constructed but beautiful, the building carries an identity that is less likely to be destroyed.

Wayfinding:

The façade of the Bowery captures one’s attention at different scales. The character of the building, with bright red brick and intricate detail work, stands out against neighboring buildings. Two flags, the American Flag and Bowery flag, are large, simple, and almost gaudy in their visual busyness. They wave off the second story of the building. Their movement catches the eyes’ attention. At one scale smaller, the bright red doors of the Bowery, meant to symbolize Christ’s blood as the entrance to life, use color to catch one’s eye when passing on either side of the street. Unlike the boutiques of the area, they actually invite all people in, creating a truly welcoming space. In allowing your eyes to focus more intently, the stained glass, framed in a tudor window box, carries images of the prodigal son being welcomed in. Underneath the stained glass is written plainly, “Bowery Mission.”

Through simple means—paint color, flags, stained glass—the building signals itself to the community with elegant and effective signage that make it hard to miss.

Interior Organization:

The interior organization structure is a chamber organization. The dining room and chapel are two large rooms, connected by a corridor. The basement and upper stories are the same overall footprint, just broken up into smaller rectangle rooms. Even the street directly in front of the Bowery becomes a big room for serving, through pop up medical clinics and the like. The simple rectangular

row building creates an efficient, logical organization that is easy to adapt to different programming needs. The adaptability of the stacked chamber organization provides a strong response to the ever-changing needs and events at the 100 year old organization.

At Bowery's Tribeca Location on 90 Lafayette Street, a brand new dining room was on display. According to Jason Storbakken, the room was designed to make a comfortable experience for those with PTSD. The design from the arrangement to the colors were intentional. The wall colors and paintings are muted tones to reduce stress. The seating in the back keeps your back against a wall. The openness of the space makes it easy to see and hear where sounds are coming from. Although the spaces inside the Bowery seem simple, they are often calculated down to the paint color.



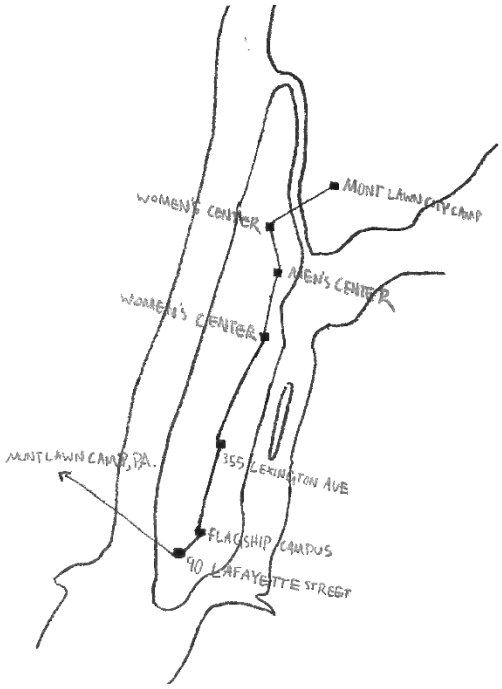
Networks:

Beyond the physical architecture is a social architecture. The Bowery functions within a network on both the city and the neighborhood scale. There are few places that are truly public, and those experiencing homelessness struggle to hold ground. On the blocks surrounding the Bowery, Sara D. Roosevelt Park, the Whole Foods, libraries, and certain street corners provide refuge. Flop houses, like the soon-to-close Sunshine Hotel, have mostly disappeared, even while nearly 80,000 New Yorkers remain homeless. Sometimes, just to sleep, homeless people will book a ticket to a casino in New Jersey just so they can have uninterrupted sleep there and back. Within this desperate social fabric, Bowery exists as the kitchen of this arrangement, providing meals twice a day. The chapel serves as a warming shelter during winter months, something few churches in the city do. In the basement, coats are distributed from a collection facility.

The ever-changing fabric of Manhattan has caused the Bowery to stay on its toes, as the expenses shift in response to new populations and infrastructure. In 1879, the organization first congregated at 14 Bowery, meeting in a single rented room before expanding to Number 37 where meals were provided. In 1887, Number 105 replaced both locations. Unfortunately, it was destroyed by fire in 1898. A brief relocation at 55 Bowery ended when it was razed to make room for the Manhattan Bridge. Finally, the Bowery landed at 227 Bowery, officially moving on November 7, 1909.[8]

Nowadays, the rapidly gentrifying streetscape is causing the homeless population to be dispersed. In response, rather than relocating, the Bowery has expanded. The Bowery Mission has formed a network of buildings throughout the city, rather than functioning as one site. In addition to 227, there is a men's recovery program in East Harlem and a women's recovery in Central Harlem. The women's center is in the Upper East Side. The Mont Lawn City Children's camps are in South Bronx and as far as Bushkill, Pennsylvania. The Bowery's office location is in Midtown on Lexington Avenue.[9] These many physical locations work together like a multicellular organism, with 227 Bowery as one unit in that system. This creates a strong web of support rather than an overcrowded hub.

In recent years, the Bowery merged with New York City Rescue Mission in Tribeca. The Rescue Mission was founded around the same time, with the Bowery mastering food distribution and the Rescue mission mastering emergency housing. This convergence of networks added strength of resources and reduced confusion for those seeking help. It was a decision inspired by a shared value of learning and improving, an attitude of adapting to the changing needs of the city. This value has kept these old organizations relevant through the changes of the decades and has made the physical architecture more productive by extension.



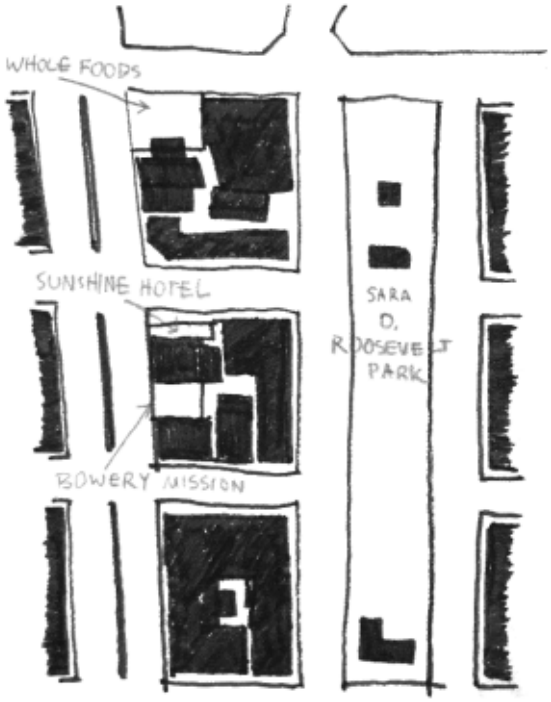


Fig. 08. Network of Bowery Locations. Illustration by author, 2021.
Fig. 09. Map of public spaces around Bowery. Illustration by author, 2021.

Impact:

The impact of the architecture is in oriented every aspect towards giving physical and emotional space for the homeless population to be taken care of. It brings dignity to an entire population.

The Bowery is unusual in its presence as one of the most fruitful homeless shelters in New York. Its success may be attributed to its reliance on human and architecture networks and its architectural design. We can derive a few key design features that contribute to the success of the Bowery in order to understand and replicate them. The key feature is the reliance on several other buildings to cover a broader, changing population center. Architecturally, the simple chamber interior organization creates a space that is easy to adapt

and make use of. The quiet interior satisfies psychological needs like rest and quiet, safety, and dignity. It is a stronghold in a difficult place. The images and symbols on the exterior through the elegant façade, stained glass, and flags create a narrative that communicates to the homeless residents that they are important and valued. Financially and socially, the Bowery relies on several large donors, but according to an interview with Rev. Jason Storbakken, the real day to day support comes from small community churches across the city, who send 5-6 people to volunteer for the day.

What began as research around one building evolved into an understanding architecture as a system of architecture. 227 Bowery does not exist by itself, but rather functions as a cornerstone of basic support within the larger system of the Bowery and of Manhattan. The architecture is not asked to serve alone, but rather serves as one pillar of support. The Bowery presents a compelling case of how architecture can exist as a series of buildings under one idea, not just one building united under one program. Likewise, the social architecture of the Bowery sees little communities fill in the gaps of support needed to run the program, like dozens of columns supporting and sustaining New York’s poor and homeless population.

Notes:

1) Google. (n.d.). [Map of New York, New York]. Retrieved December 17, 2021, from https://www.google.com/maps/@40.7257452,-73.992519,8382m/data=!3m1!1e3.

2) Storbakken, Jason. *Bowery Mission. Grit and Grace on Manhattan's Oldest Street*, Plough Publishing House, 2019. PP.131.Print.

3) "How We Help." www.bowery.org/programs/. Accessed 18 December 2021.

4) "227 BOWERY—BOWERY MISSION: landmarked in 2012!" www.boweryalliance.org/ny-designated-landmarks-historic-district-protected/. Accessed 18 December 2021.

5) "227 BOWERY—BOWERY MISSION: landmarked in 2012!" Accessed 18 December 2021.

6) Luke 15: 11-32. www.esv.org/Luke+15/. Accessed 18 December 2021.

7) Storbakken, Jason. *Bowery Mission. Grit and Grace on Manhattan's Oldest Street*, pp 33. Print.

8) "227 BOWERY—BOWERY MISSION: landmarked in 2012!" Accessed 18 December 2021.

9) "Contact and Directions." www.bowery.org/contact-and-directions/. Accessed 18 December 2021.

Concluding Thoughts:

The architecture presented in this study only scratches the surface of the many avenues through which the architecture all around us can transform our communities through thoughtful design. This approach to design carefully considers and arranges spaces towards the interests and experiences of humans before all else.

These examples demonstrate that at any scale, for any population, for any duration of time, this humanistic approach to design is not only desirable, but imperative for the well-being of our communities.

In expanding upon this research, we as designers may improve the world around us, not with sweeping reforms or radical ideas, but in a million little ways.